The University of Chicago

A HISTORY OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT BY SWEDISH SCHOLARS

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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MODERN NEW TESTAMENT RESEARCH IN SWEDEN: BACKGROUND AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Carl Gustav Carlfelt

I: The Background

The Swedish people have always been characterized by a deep love of liberty and a strong feeling of independence. Politically this is borne out by the fact that Sweden has never been the subject of another nation. When, as under the alliance with Norway and Denmark, the national freedom of Sweden was threatened, the people of that country arose to a man and drove the would-be tyrant out of the land. The same principle obtains also within the religious realm. The work of the Reformation was only a few years old when the king and the people of Sweden accepted the Lutheran faith and established a national church of their own. Even before that time the spirit of independence had asserted itself within the field of higher education, and this had resulted in the establishment of the University of Uppsala in the year 1477. About two hundred years later another university, that of Lund, was opened.

To the universities of Sweden has been entrusted the training of the ministers for the native church, but the departments of theology at these schools have not merely constituted training schools for ministers; they have always sought to promulgate further research and scientific investigation in the field of theology.

While to the casual observer it may seem that the Lutheran state church of Sweden would be rather rigid in form and conservative in spirit, upon closer investigation we find that the opposite is more nearly true. The church itself does not directly control the universities, and this is perhaps one reason why the spirit of academic freedom is here not merely tolerated but is taken for granted. Appointment of professors at the universities of Sweden is based upon scientific attainment and proven ability only, and thus a high scholastic standard is constantly maintained.

Both of the Swedish universities are quite liberal in their theology. The liberalism of Lund has a more pronounced strain of

religious warmth and fervor, while, on the other hand, that of Uppsala is somewhat more scientific and radical. Extreme liberalism has been represented at Uppsala by professors Wetter and Linderholm. Soderblom was also connected with this institution for a period of about thirty years, as professor from 1901 to 1914, and then as archbishop and chancellor of the university to the time of his death in 1931. While Soderblom was a liberal in his theological views he was not an extremist. He exerted a strong influence not only over his students and his school, but the power of his spirit and the strength of his personality were not only felt but were active throughout Christendom.

The best-known representatives of the Lund theology at present are Archbishop Erling Eidem and Bishop Gustav Aulen, who, previous to assuming their present positions, served their university as professors for a number of years.

Characterizing the theological positions of the two Swedish universities still farther, we may say that the University of Lund places a greater emphasis upon the objective element in religion, while that of Uppsala stresses the subjective side. The school at Lund is a stronghold of systematic theology. It is significant that one of the foremost dogmaticians of the Lutheran church of today, Bishop Gustav Aulen, for twenty years held the chair of systematic theology at Lund.

In order fully to understand the interpretation of the New Testament by contemporary Swedish scholarship, one must take into account the history of the Swedish bible, because it presents some very interesting and pertinent facts.

During the Middle Ages there were some private Swedish translations of the bible. The first official translation of the New Testament appeared in 1526 and was the work of the Swedish reformer, Olaus Petri. The entire bible was issued in 1541. In the table of contents of this edition Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation appear at the end of the list and are not included in the numbering followed with respect to the other books. The next edition of the Swedish Bible, that of Gustavus Adolphus, was printed in 1618. In this the four New Testament books just referred to are classified under the heading, *Apocrypha Novi Testamenti*. In this respect the bible of Gustavus Adolphus stands unique among all the "official" bible editions of the world.

The next bible to appear in Sweden was that of Charles XII, published in 1703. The books of Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation in this edition have been restored to their places as a part of the New Testament proper.

The work of revising the bible was continued, and several

proof editions were subsequently issued. It was not until 1883, however, that the Swedish church officially accepted a new translation, which for the time being became its standard edition.

In the year 1917, when the Lutheran church was celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, the Swedish church accepted its latest and most up-to-date translation of the bible. Thus we find that for a period of more than three and one-half centuries the Swedish church has been constantly engaged in the work of translating the bible, in order that it may place in the hands of its people the very best and most authenticated copy of the Scriptures available.

In this, its latest translation of Scripture, the church of Sweden possesses a work that is both monumental and significant, as it bears ample testimony to the spirit of progress and to the genuine scholarship that is at home in and characteristic of that church.

Textually the Swedish New Testament of 1917 does not follow any one text to the exclusion of others. Among the now existing texts that of E. Nestle would perhaps approach most closely that approximated by the Swedish translators. Archbishop Eidem states that in his opinion the present Swedish Bible is based on a text that would correspond to the ideas and findings of contemporary textual criticism. In all there are three hundred and fifty cases where the resultant text omits words, phrases, and sentences that occurred in the old standard edition of the Swedish New Testament.

The old "biblical language" of earlier translations is notably missing from the Swedish bible of 1917. The Swedish translators have succeeded well in their endeavor to render Scripture into a Swedish which indeed is not lacking in dignity but which at the same time is the language of the present and is in harmony with the modes of expression that are common among the people for whom this translation is intended. In its meaning this bible is not dogmatizing, since its translators have aimed to present to their modern readers what from all considerations appears to have been the intended meaning of the original authors. The most notable deviation from accustomed translations is perhaps the rendition of the phrase, *the Holy Spirit*. In thirteen instances the article is omitted, and the reading is *holy spirit*, omitting also the capitalisation of the word *spirit*.

In many instances we find that there is an agreement between the latest Swedish New Testament and the translation by Dr. E. J. Goodspeed. This indicates that the conclusions of modern scholarship are not merely individual or subjective in character, but are general and objective, since the work of the Swedish translators

and that of Dr. Goodspeed certainly was done independently and without consultation.

During the last half of the nineteenth century new theological tendencies began to be noticeable in Sweden. The theology of Schleiermacher had been represented at the University of Lund by Thomander and Reuterdahl. The latter especially held an advanced view concerning the Scriptures, claiming that the exact and true meaning of the Word must be brought forth regardless of whether this would establish or contradict any particular dogma or form of religious life. He warned against "bibliolatry" and bemoaned the fact that the bible had been accorded a place equal to and even above Christ. He insisted that the human elements in the bible must be taken into account fully to understand the purpose and meaning of a given book.

Fredrik Fehr fills a brief but very important chapter in the history of Swedish Scripture interpretation. It was in him that Ritschl found his first representative among Swedish theologians. While his work was mainly that of a pastor and superintendent (*pastor primarius*) of the churches in Stockholm, he nevertheless exerted no small influence through the spoken word and in his writings.

The theological mantle of Fehr fell upon another pastor in Stockholm whose name was S. A. Fries. Fries was more of a scientist than Fehr had been, and his interest lay especially along exegetical lines. He held the opinion that critical and scientific investigation in religion should not be hindered, but should be given full freedom, since in no way would it injure the faith of the church.

Other men who labored toward the close of the century were Rudin, Kolmodin, F. A. Johansson, and Sven Herner.

Up to this time we cannot speak of an independent theology as far as Sweden is concerned, though a beginning of this is noticeable in Pehr Eklund, who became professor at Lund in 1890. The theological tenets that were promulgated in Sweden had so far, in the main at least, originated in Germany. This does not mean, however, that the Swedish scholars merely copied from their German brethren. Concerning the nineteenth century theology of the Swedish church it would perhaps be more correct to say that while it was born in Germany it was nurtured and brought up on Swedish soil and was made to conform to Swedish conditions.

The coming of the new century also saw the dawning of a new day within the field of Scriptural interpretation and the study of religion generally in Sweden. In no small degree the credit for this change is due to the erudite scholarship and the boundless

energy of Nathan Soderblom. While both a pioneer and an authority within the field of comparative religion, no part of religious inquiry was in reality foreign to him. Among his many great services to his land and to his church nothing, perhaps, was of greater and more lasting influence than his encouragement of scholarship as he also seemed able to create an atmosphere in which theological investigation not only was made possible but was fostered and brought greatly forward. From his time on we may speak of a really productive scholarship in Sweden, and many of the writings produced have been translated into German and English, which proves that the scholars of Sweden have won recognition outside of their own land. The names of Archbishop Eidem, Bishop Aulen, Professors Rudberg, Bohlin, Nygren, Lindblom, Brilioth, Runestam, and others are known and respected among the theologians of Europe especially, and they are also receiving due recognition in America. In the writings of these men there is now to be seen something which was formerly lacking, namely, that which is distinctively and characteristically Swedish. While the various individuals naturally differ a great deal from one another, there is an undertone of cultural and theological friendship discernable. This is not yet crystallized enough to form a "school" of theology in the strict sense of that term as usually applied to the Dutch or the Tübingen schools. Some very strong and definite tendencies are in evidence, however, and it is not altogether outside the realm of possibility that in the future we may have a distinct school of Swedish Scripture interpretation.

Among these tendencies we notice first of all the general view of Christianity as held by the scholars under consideration. Here we find that whereas once the cry among the theologians was that if we would get back to the "simple teachings of Jesus" we would find the real essence of Christianity, the theologians of Sweden on the other hand maintain the very opposite view. Christianity is viewed by them as dynamic, as a drama continually unfolding itself and developing in time. Christianity is a living organism, and as such it is constantly growing and also creating new modes of expression for itself. It is also spoken of as a living stream, flowing through the ages.

This view of Christianity, naturally, also affects the idea and conception of revelation. If God has spoken once to man, the Swedish scholars see no reason why he should not be able thus to speak also in the present. In fact, revelation has for them no value unless God augments and confirms the revelation given of old by speaking to the hearts of individuals in the present. As to the writings delivered to us by early Christianity, they must

be subjected to the same tests as are other historical works. In cases where our traditional views are not substantiated by such tests traditions must yield to facts scientifically obtained. In the stream of revelation there must of necessity be strata of varying degrees of clarity, and it is the function of the scientific investigator to distinguish between these. Eidem especially holds the view that for the engendering of a religious life not even holy truths are sufficient. Sanctified personalities, filled with the spirit of God, are necessary for this, and thus again he stresses the value and the absolute indispensability of a continued revelation.

The social, economic, and religious life of the age in which Christianity came into being are investigated by the Swedish scholars for the light which these factors can throw upon the problem of the origin of Christianity itself and in distinguishing its various component elements. In this respect there is a close similarity between the position held by the Swedish theologians and that of Professor S. J. Case of the University of Chicago. The writings of the New Testament are also interrogated for Hellenistic influences both in makeup and content. This subject is given an excellent treatment by Professor Gunnar Rudberg, who draws the conclusion that hardly anything in Hellenistic tradition can *a priori* be put aside or regarded as irrelevant in our endeavors to interpret the New Testament.

The questions of the authorship, time and place of composition of the separate books of the New Testament is given due consideration. While no formal and independent theory is set up in this respect, the problems involved are given ample enough treatment to warrant the statement that the findings of the Swedish scholars within this field substantiate the judgments of the best of our contemporary scholarship.

The existence in time of the historical Jesus is posited. We are warned not to lay too great stress upon any scholastic interpretation of the doctrine of the trinity as that is supposed to have been set forth by the ancient symbols of the church. These confessional writings of antiquity should be understood in the light of their own day and be allowed to have the meaning intended for them by their writers. The main fact in regard to Jesus is not to be able to define his nature but to comprehend that in him we may possess God's heart and will and to realize that above all else it was divine love that was incarnated in him.

Jesus was a child of his own people and of his own time, and both of these facts influenced him greatly both as to his own religion and his opinion about himself as the fulfillment of the

Messianic idea. Here, again, a word of warning is spoken by the contemporary Swedish scholars. The question regarding the faith of Jesus and the religion about Jesus has been over-accentuated, according to their opinions. The paramount issue and the real question of Christianity are not what Jesus taught about himself but what God meant and means about him and his work. Not the person of Jesus nor yet his natures are considered to be the essential, but his life work.

That life work of Jesus has not yet attained to its culmination, because Jesus must be considered not only as a historical person of the past but also as the Christ, now living and active in the midst of a spiritual community. Jesus and Christ cannot be separated from one another. The contact with the Jesus of the gospels will purify our Christ faith and bring it to still greater possibilities. That kind of Christology, however, is not to be thought of as a photograph of the historical Jesus but rather as the application which each succeeding age makes of him and of the mysterious power that in his name is active in the world. Swedish theology, then, is Christ centered, but not to the exclusion of being also strongly theocentric. The sovereignty of God is emphasized again and again. He is the holy, inexpressible, and unfathomable one. He eternally creates order out of chaos and goes his own way in the manner of sovereign majesty. To believe in Christ is defined as a trust in him and in the power of his spirit, and to believe in the holy spirit means to believe in God as a holy and lifegiving spirit. The reconciliation between God and man is thought of in terms of God seeking man, rather than man seeking for or offering anything to God.

True to their Lutheran background the Swedish theologians stress the idea of the church as the means through which God works in the world, and in this respect they naturally approach the position of the Anglican theology.

A survey of the recent interpretation of the New Testament by Swedish scholars shows that they are well aware of all the problems that now present themselves within the entire field. They are also well prepared to deal with these problems, and they grapple with them in an independent way and in the spirit of fearless truth seeking. Therefore, when the results of their investigations either corroborate or refute or improve upon the theories and the findings of other scholars, we must take cognizance of them and of their work. We can therefore make the general statement that contemporary interpretation of the New Testament in Sweden constitutes a valuable contribution to the general science of New Testament interpretation.

II. *Vitae* of the Principal Swedish New Testament Scholars

Aulen, Gustav Emanuel Hildebrand

Born in Sweden, 1879. Graduated, Uppsala University (*Filosophie Kandidat*) 1899, Licentiate in Theology 1906, Docent in Theological Encyclopedia at Uppsala 1907, Docent in Dogmatics at Uppsala 1910, Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Lund 1913, Doctor of Theology at Uppsala 1915. Studied in Germany, France and England 1903, 1908, 1914, 1926. Editor of the *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalsskrift* (*Swedish Theological Quarterly*) since 1925. Bishop in Strängnäs Diocese 1933-.

Aurelius, Erik

Born in Sweden, 1874. Graduated, Uppsala University (*Filosophie Kandidat*) 1894, Licentiate in Theology 1905, Docent in Exegetical Theology at Uppsala 1908, Professor of Exegetical Theology at Lund 1912, Doctor of Theology at Lund 1912. Bishop of the Diocese of Linköping 1927-.

Bohlin, Torsten Bernhard

Born in Uppsala, Sweden, December 2, 1889. Educated at Uppsala University (*Theologie Kandidat*, 1912, *Filosophie Kandidat*, 1913), Licentiate in Theology at Uppsala 1917, Docent at Uppsala 1918, Doctor of Theology at Uppsala 1921. Professor of Systematic Theology at Åbo, Finland, 1925; Professor of Systematic Theology at Uppsala 1929-.

Eidem, Erling

Born in Sweden, 1890. Graduated, University of Lund (*Theologie Kandidat*) 1907, Licentiate in Theology at Lund 1912, Docent in New Testament Exegesis at Lund 1913-1924, Doctor of Theology at Lund, 1918, Associate Professor at Uppsala 1918-1919, Professor of New Testament Exegesis at Uppsala 1924. Member, the Swedish Bible Revision Committee. At present Professor of New Testament Exegesis at Lund. Archbishop of Sweden, 1931-.

Lindblom, Johannes Christian

Born in Sweden, 1892. Graduated, University of Uppsala (*Filosofie Kandidat*) 1902, Licentiate in Theology at Uppsala 1908, Docent in Exegetical Theology at Lund 1911, Doctor of Theology at Lund, 1912, Professor of Exegetical Theology at the University of Åbo, Finland, 1924. Studied at the University of Halle 1905, Marburg 1907, Paris 1912. Member, The Swedish Bible

Revision Committee. Professor of Exegetical Theology at Lund, 1930-.

Linderholm, J. Emanuel

Born in Sweden, 1872. Graduated, Uppsala University 1905, Licentiate in Theology at Uppsala 1908, Docent in Church History at Uppsala 1911, Doctor of Theology at Uppsala 1915, Professor of Church History at Uppsala 1919-. Editor of *Kyrkohistorisk Årskrift*, 1920-.

Nygren, Anders Theodor Samuel

Born in Göteborg, Sweden, November 15, 1890. Graduated at the University of Lund (*Theologie Kandidat*) 1912, Ordained to the ministry 1912, Licdntiate in Theology at Lund 1921, Doctor of Theology at Lund 1923, Docent in the Philosophy of Religion at Lund 1921, Professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics at Lund 1924-.

Rudberg, Gunnar

Born in Sweden, 1880. Graduated, the University of Uppsala (*Filosophie Kandidat*) 1903. Licentiate in Philosophy at Uppsala 1907, Doctor of Philosophy at Uppsala 1908, Docent in Greek at Uppsala 1908, Professor in Classical Philology, the University of Oslo, 1919-, Visiting Professor at Uppsala 1928.

Stave, Erik Erikson

Born in Sweden, June 10, 1857. Graduated, Uppsala University (*Filosophie Kandidat* 1884, *Theologie Kandidat* 1889). Docent in Exegesis at Uppsala 1889, Assistant Professor of Exegesis 1899, Professor of Exegesis, 1900-1922. Died, April 30, 1932

Söderblom, Lars Olov Jonathan

Born in Sweden, January 15, 1866. Educated at Uppsala University (*Filosophie Kandidat* 1886, *Theologie Kandidat* 1892), *Eleve Diplome* from *L'Ecole des Hautes Etudes*, Paris, 1898, Doctor of Theology, The University of Paris, 1901. Professor at Uppsala 1901-1914. Archbishop of Sweden 1914-1932. Honorary degrees: Doctor of Theology, Geneva 1909, Oslo 1911, Saint Andrew's 1911, Glasgow 1921, Griefswald 1922, Trinity College, Dublin, 1926, Sopron 1928, Copenhagen 1919; Doctor of Philosophy, Uppsala 1917, Griefswald 1922, Bonn 1924; Doctor of Laws, Berlin 1921, Oxford 1923; Doctor of Medicine, Griefswald 1922. Died, July 12, 1931

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